(c) if so, the reasons for directing Coast Guard to interfere with fishing operations of Indian fishermen; and

(d) the steps proposed to call an urgent meeting of the Empowered Committee to solve the problems of fishermen with Coast Guard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir. With the approval of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), Ministry of Agriculture has constituted an Inter-ministerial Empowered Committee (EC) on Marine Fisheries for making recommendations on various issues related to development of marine fisheries in India.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The Empowered Committee generally meets as often as required, but not less than once in six months depending on the necessity of holding this meeting. The last meeting of the EC was held on 16th April, 2009.

Remunerative price to coconut growers

2267. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that coconut growers are not getting remunerative price for their produce;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the zero per cent import duty on palmolin and palm oil is one of the reasons for the crash in prices of coconut;

(d) if so, whether Government will impose higher duty on palmolin and palm oil; and

(e) steps Government propose to take to give remunerative price to coconut growers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government of India has been fixing Minimum Support Price for Copra and De-husked Coconut every year.

(c) and (d) Price of any commodity including coconut is determined by the overall market forces of demand and supply. In order to ensure that the farmers of the country are not put to any hardship, the Government has put in place a suitable mechanism for monitoring the import of sensitive items including agricultural items and is committed to provide adequate protection to the domestic producers by appropriate calibration of applied tariffs and safeguard action under certain specified circumstances. Given the production, availability and price situation in the country, appropriate measures are taken by the Government which include review of import.

(e) For the crop season 2009, the Government of India has fixed MSP for Milling Copra at Rs. 4450 per quintal and Ball Copra at Rs. 4700 per quintal for FAQ Variety which is higher by Rs. 790 per quintal over the MSP of 2008 crop season. The Government of India has fixed MSP for de-husked coconut at Rs. 1200 per quintal for 2009 season which is higher by Rs. 212 per quintal over the MSP of previous season.

NAFED, being the Central nodal agency has procured 9465 tonnes of Milling copra valued Rs. 4582.95 lakh at the MSP of Rs. 4450 per quintal in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Lakshadweep and 1040 tonnes ball copra valued Rs. 531.13 lakh at the MSP of Rs. 4700 per quintal in the State of Karnataka under Price Support Scheme during 2009 season.

Government has prohibited export of all edible oils except coconut oil, with effect from 17.03.2008 and has not permitted import of Crude and Refined Palm Oil through any port of Kerala with effect from 24.12.2007.

Drought situation in the country

2268. SHRI PRABHAT JHA:
SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country is in the grip of serious drought;

(b) if so, the State-wise details thereof;

(c) whether Government has made any assessment of drought affected States; and

(d) the details of the assistance being given to drought affected States by Government to tackle the problem of drought?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) As reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), during South-West Monsoon, 2009 (1.6.2009 to 15.7.2009), the country, as a whole, received 220.5 mm of rainfall against normal average rainfall of 300.8 mm of rainfall, with a deviation of (-)27%. Out of 36 meteorological sub-divisions in the country, 2 received excess rainfall, 12 received normal rainfall, 20 received deficient rainfall and 2 received scanty rainfall, during the period. The State Governments of Assam, Jharkhand and Manipur have intimated regarding declaration of drought this year.

(c) and (d) It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned to take necessary measures in the wake of natural calamities including drought. The Government of India supplements the efforts of the States with financial and logistic support. The States have ready availability of funds in the < Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for taking such measures. For additional assistance over and above CRF, for natural calamities of severe nature, the affected States are required to send a memorandum for assistance from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF). No memorandum for assistance from NCCF for the current drought has so far been received from any State.